



A Study of Corrective Action Schools in Tennessee

Jim Craig
Leslie Cairo III
Aaron Butler

December 2005

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)
at

EDVANTIATM
Partners in education. Focused on results.

A Study of Corrective Action Schools in Tennessee

by

Jim Craig
Leslie Cairo III
Aaron Butler

December 2005

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) at Edvantia
Charleston, West Virginia

Edvantia was founded in 1966 as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL); on September 1, 2005, AEL became Edvantia, Inc. The Regional Educational Laboratory for the Appalachian region is known as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia.

Edvantia is a nonprofit education research and development corporation, founded in 1966, that partners with practitioners, education agencies, publishers, and service providers to improve learning and advance student success. Edvantia provides clients with a range of services, including research, evaluation, professional development, and consulting.

For information about Edvantia research, products, or services, contact



P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325; 304.347.0400 or 800.624.9120
info@edvantia.org • www.edvantia.org

© 2005 by Edvantia

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of Edvantia.

Edvantia maintains policies and procedures that govern the Institutional Review Board in ensuring the welfare and protecting the rights of human subjects who choose to participate in research and evaluation activities.

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, under contract number ED-01-CO-0016. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of IES, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. government.

Edvantia is an equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools	1
Edvantia's Model of High Performing Learning Communities	2
Purpose.....	3
Research Questions	3
METHODS	5
Participating Schools	5
Data Collection Techniques.....	5
Surveys.....	6
Interviews.....	8
Procedures.....	8
Surveys.....	8
Interviews.....	9
Data Analysis	9
Surveys.....	10
Interviews.....	10
RESULTS	11
Survey Instruments	11
Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire	11
Measure of School Capacity for Improvement	13
Parent Survey	15
Survey Summary.....	20
Interviews.....	21
Interview Summary.....	37
Documents	38
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	
APPENDIX B: PARENT SURVEY	
APPENDIX C: PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARDS CHECKLIST	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Descriptions of Edvantia's components of a high-performing learning community .....2
Table 2	Percentages of minority and economically disadvantaged students enrolled in the 24 Corrective Action schools studied .....5
Table 3	The <i>t</i> test values, α levels, and Cohen's <i>d</i> values associated with the differences between CSIQ means for the Corrective Action elementary schools that made and did not make AYP in 2004 .....11
Table 4	The <i>t</i> test values, α levels, and Cohen's <i>d</i> values associated with the differences between CSIQ means for the Corrective Action middle schools that made and did not make AYP in 2004 .....12
Table 5	The <i>t</i> test values, α levels, and Cohen's <i>d</i> values associated with the differences between MSCI means for the Corrective Action elementary schools that made and did not make AYP in 2004 .....13
Table 6	The <i>t</i> test values, α levels, and Cohen's <i>d</i> values associated with the differences between MSCI means for Corrective Action middle schools that made and did not make AYP in 2004 .....14
Table 7	Number of parents responding, means, and standard deviations for each school level for Parent Survey Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 .....15
Table 8	Number of parents responding, means, and standard deviations for each school level for Parent Survey Item 7 .....16
Table 9	Number of parents responding, means, and standard deviations for each school level for Parent Survey Items 8, 9, and 10 .....17
Table 10	Number of parents responding, means, and standard deviations for each school level for Parent Survey Items 11 and 12 .....18
Table 11	Number of parents responding, means, and standard deviations for each school level for Parent Survey Items 13, 14, 15, and 16 .....19

ABSTRACT

In 2001, the Tennessee Department of Education identified underperforming schools from across the state as Corrective Action schools. Corrective Action schools are among those that failed to meet federal and state guidelines for adequate yearly progress (AYP). The present study was conducted to examine the key features of 9 Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year and to compare those findings to the attributes of 15 Corrective Action schools that failed to make AYP during the same year. Interviews of staff at participating schools yielded differences in perceptions of an Aligned and Balanced Curriculum, Purposeful Student Assessment, and Shared Goals for Learning when components of high-performing school indicators were analyzed. The Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ) and the Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI) survey also uncovered differences between those schools that made AYP and those that did not. Specifically, scores on the Aligned and Balanced Curriculum, Purposeful Student Assessment, Shared Goals for Learning, Learning Culture, Peer Reviewed Practice, Expectations for Student Performance, and Technical Resources scales showed significant differences between those schools that made AYP and those that did not. Evidence was found that, at the middle school level, parents of students at schools making AYP responded more positively on the average regarding communication between parents and teachers and the value of celebration of student successes and requests for parent input. Interestingly, at the elementary level, there was also evidence that parents of students at schools not making AYP responded more positively regarding the provision of a newsletter by the school, attendance at Open House, and involvement in parent/teacher organizations

INTRODUCTION

The identification of what low-performing schools should do to increase student achievement has been a focus of many research studies (Education Trust, 2001). There has been particular interest in identifying practices of high-performing schools that can be implemented in low-performing schools to improve student achievement, especially in schools that have high percentages of minority and low socioeconomic status (SES) students (e.g., Ellis, Gaudet, Hoover, Rizoli, & Mader, 2004; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). In some cases, the practices have been identified through research and developed into descriptive models of high-performing learning communities.

High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

A number of researchers have reported their findings regarding the key features of high-performing, high-poverty schools (e.g., Ellis, et al., 2004; Just for the Kids, 2001; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002; Reeves, 2000). Collectively, researchers have not identified one “best” approach to improving student achievement other than to focus on that improvement and work hard to ensure that it happens (e.g., Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2000; Washington State Department of Education, 2005). However, researchers have typically reported that high-performing, high-poverty schools exhibit some of the following characteristics such as:

- holding high expectations for students and teachers (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; Picucci et al., 2002)
- focusing on implementing a curriculum aligned with applicable standards (Ellis, et al., 2004; Reeves, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1999)
- devoting maximum time to instruction during the school day (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; McGee, 2004; Picucci et al., 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 1999)
- using purposeful assessment to inform instruction (Education Trust, 1999; Hair, Kraft, & Allen, 2001; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; McGee, 2004; Reeves, 2000)
- emphasizing collaboration or teamwork among teachers and collaborative decision-making processes (Hair, Kraft, & Allen, 2001; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; McGee, 2004; Picucci et al., 2002; Trimble, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 1999)

- having hard-working, effective teachers (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, 2004; McGee, 2004; Hair, Kraft, & Allen, 2001)
- having effective leadership (Ellis et al., 2004; McGee, 2004)
- having high levels of parent involvement (Education Trust, 1999; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 1999)

Edvantia's Model of High-Performing Learning Communities

Based on years of working with a network of schools striving to improve, Edvantia (formerly AEL) staff developed a model of high-performing learning communities. The model consists of seven components: (a) aligned and balanced curriculum, (b) purposeful student assessment, (c) effective teaching, (d) shared leadership, (e) shared goals for learning, (f) learning culture, and (g) school/family/community connections. These components are described in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptions of Edvantia's Components of a High-Performing Learning Community*

Component	Description
Aligned and Balanced Curriculum	The extent to which the school's curriculum is aligned and balanced; the principal is involved in monitoring the curriculum alignment process, the lesson plans of teachers, and use of student achievement data in curriculum emphasis; and subjects/courses are balanced across grades.
Purposeful Student Assessment	The extent to which student assessment data are meaningful and used by teachers to guide instructional decisions and communicate with teachers, parents, students, and other members of the community.
Effective Teaching	The extent to which teacher practice is aligned with research on effective teaching including whether teachers actively engage students in a variety of learning tasks, pose questions that encourage reflection and higher order thinking, expect students to think critically, and use strategies designed to motivate students.

Component	Description
Shared Leadership	The extent to which leadership is shared with open, bi-directional communication and there are mechanisms in place for involving teachers, students, and parents in leadership development.
Shared Goals for Learning	The extent to which the school has clear, focused goals that are understood by all members of the school community and the extent to which shared goals affect what is taught and how teachers teach, drive decisions about resources, focus on results for students, and are developed and “owned” by many rather than a few.
Learning Culture	The extent to which the culture of the school encourages learning by students, staff, and administrators, to which the school is a safe but exciting place to be where curiosity and exploration are encouraged, and to which teachers have opportunities and encouragement to reflect on practice, work with others, and try new ways of teaching.
School/Family/Community Connections	The extent to which parents and community members are involved and feel part of the school through informing parents and community, forming meaningful partnerships, maintaining open communication, and honoring and respecting diverse points of view.

Purpose

The present study of low-performing schools in one state was conducted to identify and describe differences, if any, between those low-performing schools that made adequate yearly progress (AYP) as required by No Child Left Behind law (subsequently labeled “Restructuring 1 schools”) and those schools that did not (subsequently labeled “Restructuring 2 schools”). Of particular interest was whether low-performing schools making AYP demonstrate any of the characteristics researchers have found to be typical of high-performing, high-poverty schools and/or AEL/Edvantia’s model of high-performing learning communities.

Research Questions

The research questions address differences between low-performing schools that have made AYP and those that have not in relation to

- (1) how they determine whether their students have learned the content necessary to be successful on the state assessments
- (2) how meaningful teachers and administrators view student assessment data to be
- (3) how teacher practices align with the research on effective teaching
- (4) whether teachers view leadership as being shared
- (5) whether the school has clear, focused goals that are understood by all members of the school community
- (6) how learning is encouraged by staff and students
- (7) whether parents/family/community members are involved in and feel they are a part of the school

METHODS

Participating Schools

In 2003, the Tennessee Department of Education designated 28 schools as Corrective Action for the 2003-2004 school year. This designation was based on the schools' failure to meet accountability criteria for at least two consecutive years since being identified for improvement by the Tennessee Department of Education. These 28 schools constituted the population for this study. In 2004, one Corrective Action school was closed by its governing district, reducing the number of schools available to participate to 27. One Corrective Action school did not participate in the interviews of this study because the principal and a majority of the faculty at that school were not on staff at the school during the 2003-2004 school year; therefore, they could not provide researchers the data necessary to contribute to this study. Appalachia Educational Laboratory researchers decided, given available resources, to narrow the scope of the study to include only elementary and middle/junior high schools. This reduced the number of participating schools to 8 elementary schools and 15 middle/junior high schools (including middle grade faculty from one school with a middle-high school configuration) participating in the interviews and 24 schools completing surveys. These 24 schools had high percentages of minority students and students designated as economically disadvantaged. The average percentages are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Percentages of Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Students Enrolled in the 24 Corrective Action Schools Studied*

School Variables	All Corrective Action Schools	Made AYP (subsequently labeled Restructuring 1 Schools)	Did Not Make AYP (subsequently labeled Restructuring 2 Schools)
Free and Reduced-Price Lunch	90.81%	91.32%	90.52%
% Minority	97.65%	93.79%	95.67%

Data Collection Techniques

Both surveys and interviews were used to collect data. The surveys provided quantitative information that described the extent to which the schools were high performing learning communities or were capable of becoming one. The survey data were augmented by teacher and

administrator interviews which provided meaningful qualitative information that the AEL researchers could use to help interpret survey findings and to identify emerging themes.

Surveys

Three survey instruments were used to collect data about the participating schools. These instruments were the Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ) (AEL, 2002), the Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI) (Edvantia, 2005), and a Parent Survey. The CSIQ and the MSCI measure various aspects of school culture and were designed to be completed by school professional staff. The Parent Survey was designed to assess parent/school interaction and be completed by parents. Each survey instrument is described below.

Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ). The 70-item CSIQ is designed to measure school performance on seven dimensions related to being a high-performing learning community. The CSIQ is intended to be completed by school professional staff. Professional staff are asked to rate the extent to which each item is present in their school, using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not present*) to 6 (*Present to a High Degree*). Participants are also asked to respond to additional demographic items. The survey has proven reliability and validity characteristics, established norms to facilitate interpretation, and is formatted for machine scoring (AEL, 2002).

The CSIQ consists of seven subscales:

- **Aligned and Balanced Curriculum.** This scale reflects the extent to which professional staff perceive the school's curriculum to be aligned and balanced. It assesses the principal's involvement in the monitoring of the curriculum alignment process, the lesson plans of the teachers, and activities in the classroom. Also, this scale measures teachers' access to curriculum resources, use of student achievement data in curriculum emphasis, and how subjects/courses are balanced across grades.
- **Purposeful Student Assessment.** This subscale reflects the extent to which student assessment data are meaningful; are used by teachers to guide instructional decisions; and are communicated to and understood by the greater school community, including teachers, parents, students, and other members of the community.
- **Effective Teaching.** This subscale ascertains the extent to which teacher practice is aligned with research on effective teaching. It assesses whether teachers actively engage students in a variety of learning tasks, pose questions that encourage reflection and higher order thinking, expect students to think critically, and use teaching strategies designed to motivate students.
- **Shared Leadership.** This subscale reflects the extent to which leadership is viewed as being shared. It assesses whether school administrators dominate decisionmaking or if there are mechanisms for involving teachers, students, and parents in the process. Opportunities for leadership development among members of the school community are assessed, as are the degree to which information is shared and the extent to which school administrators listen and solicit the input of others.

- **Shared Goals for Learning.** This subscale assesses the extent to which the school has clear, focused goals that are understood by all members of the school community. In addition, it reflects whether shared goals affect what is taught and how teachers teach, drive decisions about resource allocation, focus on improved results for students, and are developed and “owned” by many rather than a few.
- **Learning Culture.** This subscale reflects whether the culture of the school promotes learning by all—students, staff, and administrators. It reflects the extent to which the school emphasizes learning rather than passive compliance, is a safe but exciting place to be, and encourages curiosity and exploration. In addition, it indicates the extent to which teachers have opportunities and encouragement to reflect on practice, work with others, and try new ways of teaching.
- **School/Family/Community Connections.** This subscale assesses the extent to which parents and community members are involved and feel part of the school. It reflects the degrees to which they are kept informed, meaningful partnerships exist, communication is open, and diverse points of view are honored and respected.

The items listed above align with the framework elements described in Table 1.

Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI). The 64-item¹ MSCI is designed to assess the degree to which schools possess the potential to become high-performing learning communities. It is intended to be completed by school professional staff. For 31 items, professional staff are asked to rate the extent to which each item is true for their school, using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 6 (*completely true*). For the remaining items, professional staff are asked to rate how often each item is true for their school using a similar 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 6 (*always true*). Participants are also asked to respond to additional demographic items. The survey is formatted for machine scoring. The MSCI has proven reliability and validity characteristics, has established norms to facilitate interpretation, and is formatted for machine scoring (Edvantia, 2005).

The MSCI consists of seven subscales. These are described below:

- **Equity in Practice.** This subscale assesses equitable practices in the school, specifically addressing responsive pedagogy and anti-discriminatory practices including the creation of an atmosphere of tolerance, cultural awareness, and equity.
- **Expectations for Student Performance.** This subscale assesses staff members’ expectations of the students and their beliefs that all students can perform well academically.
- **Differentiated Instruction.** This subscale addresses using or modifying instructional practices to reach students of diverse learning needs.
- **Improvement Program Coherence.** This subscale pertains to improvement initiatives that a school might undertake and focuses on the coordination of improvement programs

¹ Participants in this study completed a field-test version of the MSCI with 64 items. There are fewer items on the current version of the MSCI.

or initiatives with existing initiatives and with school improvement goals and focuses on school-level support of and for improvement initiatives.

- **Peer Reviewed Practice.** This subscale assesses the extent to which professional staff in a school observe the work of their colleagues and give or receive relevant feedback about their performance.
- **Coordinated Curriculum.** This subscale addresses the coordination of curriculum within and across grade levels at the school.
- **Technical Resources.** This subscale assesses instructional resources and materials, including whether staff possessed or had immediate access to adequate materials and resources to achieve instructional objectives.

Parent Survey. The 16-item Parent Survey was designed to assess the frequency and quality of interactions between the school and students' parents. It is intended to be completed by students' parents. Parents are asked to rate how often each item occurs, using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). The survey provides information regarding: (1) communication between parents and teachers, (2) celebration of student successes, (3) requests for parent input, (4) communication between parents and the school, and (5) parent involvement in the school. A copy of the Parent Survey is included in Appendix B.

Interviews

Because there were typically many initiatives being implemented in the Corrective Action School to facilitate their improvement (e.g., the assignment of Exemplary Educators by the State of Tennessee), AEL researchers developed an interview protocol based on the components of a high-performing learning community to capture the richness and diversity of activities occurring in the schools. The interview framework (see Table 1) consisted of seven components that have been identified as key features of continuously improving schools: (1) aligned and balanced curriculum, (2) purposeful student assessment, (3) effective teaching, (4) shared leadership, (5) shared goals for learning, (6) learning culture, and (7) school/family/community connections. In addition, the interview protocol included general opening and closing questions. The interview questions are presented in Appendix A.

Procedures

Surveys

Independent consultants administered the CSIQ, MSCI, and Parent Survey at the 24 sites. Researchers conducted an orientation session with the consultants, during which the study and protocols for administering the instruments were explained. The CSIQ and MSCI were administered to school professional staff in faculty meetings or in other whole-group settings. A convenience sample of parents completed the Parent Survey. Upon administration of the CSIQ

and MSCI, researchers met with consultants to collect the completed instruments. Parent Surveys were sent to research staff upon completion.

Interviews

Teams of 2 to 4 Appalachia Educational Laboratory researchers visited the 23 participating schools to conduct structured, on-site interviews with school faculty and administrators. Researchers first contacted the principals of the participating schools and asked for their assistance in scheduling interviews with a sample (10-12) of faculty in their schools. In all, nearly 300 interviews were scheduled. Due to schedule changes and some teachers' inability to participate in their scheduled interviews, 252 interviews actually were conducted across the 23 sites. The majority of interview participants were core content teachers (i.e., language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). The remaining interviews were completed with non-core content teachers. The principals of all 23 schools participated in interviews.

For inclusion in this study, each interviewee signed an approved Informed Consent form, which stated the interviewee's rights as a research subject and listed contact information for researchers and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Edvantia. Participants were instructed to contact researchers if they had questions regarding this study or if they decided to discontinue participation. Participants were also instructed to contact the IRB if they had questions about their rights as research subjects. Participation in this study as interviewees was completely voluntary.

Each interview was recorded on audiotape with permission of the interviewee and transcribed for data processing and analysis. All interviews were conducted at respondents' respective school, and most interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

Surveys

Upon receipt of completed instruments, researchers scanned, scored, and analyzed the data using the standard norms and protocols associated with each of the instruments. The results of the normed instruments (i.e., CSIQ and MSCI) were provided to the principals of the participating schools in the form of school profiles. Responses to the Parent Survey were summarized and descriptive statistics for the items on the survey were tabulated. Next, *t* tests were conducted and effect sizes were determined for the significant *t* values. Alpha was set at .01.

Interviews

To analyze the content of the interviews, transcripts were made of each recorded interview. Using NVivo software, researchers analyzed the transcripts by grouping the responses into themed categories and then coding each of the transcripts.

RESULTS

Survey Instruments

The CSIQ is a measure of how much a school staff sees their school being a high-performing learning community in the areas of having an aligned and balanced curriculum, engaging in purposeful student assessment, practicing effective teaching, sharing leadership, sharing goals for learning, having a learning culture, and having school/family/community connections.

Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ)

Three survey instruments were used to collect data from the professional staff in the participating schools: (1) the CSIQ, (2) the MSCl, and (3) the Parent Survey. The data obtained using each will be described in turn below.

Elementary schools. A *t* test procedure was conducted to analyze patterns of difference in CSIQ scores between elementary schools that made AYP in 2004 and schools that did not. Responses from education professionals in the two groups of schools were not statistically different in most areas. Responses in the area of Purposeful Student Assessment were significantly higher in elementary schools that made AYP than in elementary schools that did not. This analysis is summarized in Table 3. The effect size associated with this significant difference would be judged to be medium-small (i.e., $d = .37$) (Cohen, 1977).

Table 3. *The t Test Values, α Levels, and Cohen's d Values Associated with the Differences between CSIQ Means for the Corrective Action Elementary Schools that Made and Did Not Make AYP in 2004*

Scale	Did or did not make AYP in 2004	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size	t test value	df	p value	d
Aligned and Balanced Curriculum	Made AYP	47.53	7.55	154	1.41	238	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	46.06	8.13	86				
Purposeful Student Assessment	Made AYP	50.63	5.97	163	2.71	250	$p < .01$	.37
	Did not	48.00	8.01	89				
Effective Teaching	Made AYP	50.67	5.93	160	1.91	247	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	48.98	7.87	89				
Shared Leadership	Made AYP	48.20	9.51	163	.929	248	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	47.03	9.39	87				
Shared Goals for Learning	Made AYP	51.01	6.46	161	2.06	247	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	49.20	6.95	88				
Learning Culture	Made AYP	50.50	6.40	162	.623	250	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	49.98	6.34	90				
School/Family/Community Connections	Made AYP	46.76	8.36	161	.994	246	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	45.63	8.90	87				

Middle schools. More differences for the CSIQ subscale score averages were observed at the middle school level than at the elementary level. Professionals in middle schools that made AYP in 2004 recorded significantly higher scores than professionals in middle schools that did not make AYP in the areas of Learning Culture, Shared Goals for Learning, and Purposeful Student Assessment. The effect sizes associated with these significant differences were medium-small (i.e., $d = .32$ to $d = .45$). There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the remaining CSIQ subscales. These analyses are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. *The t Test Values, α Levels, and Cohen's d Values Associated with the Differences Between CSIQ Means for the Corrective Action Middle Schools that Made and Did Not Make AYP in 2004*

Scale	Did or did not make AYP in 2004	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size	t test value	df	p value	d
Aligned and Balanced Curriculum	Made AYP	46.58	6.77	72	2.81	137	$p < .01$	.32
	Did not	43.92	9.55	348				
Purposeful Student Assessment	Made AYP	48.90	5.62	77	3.99	176	$p < .01$	.42
	Did not	45.69	9.23	363				
Effective Teaching	Made AYP	49.25	6.22	76	1.23	136	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	48.22	8.20	362				
Shared Leadership	Made AYP	48.46	9.45	73	2.29	115	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	45.61	11.13	370				
Shared Goals for Learning	Made AYP	50.40	5.72	71	3.84	144	$p < .01$	.43
	Did not	47.26	8.70	353				
Learning Culture	Made AYP	51.52	5.21	75	4.14	153	$p < .01$	.45
	Did not	48.50	8.01	377				
School/Family/Community Connections	Made AYP	44.44	8.98	75	.998	438	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	43.14	10.45	365				

Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI)

The MSCI instrument assesses the extent to which a school possesses the potential to become a high-performing learning community. Subscale scores are produced that assess perceptions regarding the equity of practice, expectations for student performance, differentiated instruction, coherence in an improvement program, peer reviewed practice, coordinated curriculum, and technical resources.

Elementary schools. A t test analysis of faculty responses to the MSCI revealed significant differences between Corrective Action elementary schools that made AYP in 2004 and those that did not in two areas: Peer Reviewed Practice and Coordinated Curriculum. The effect sizes were $d = .34$ and $d = .35$ —both medium-small effect sizes. Refer to Table 5.

Table 5. *The t Test Values, α Levels, and Cohen's d Values Associated with the Differences Between MSCI Means for the Corrective Action Elementary Schools that Made and Did Not Make AYP in 2004*

Scale	Did or did not make AYP in 2004	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size	t test value	df	p value	d
Equity of Practice	Made AYP	5.08	.668	204	1.16	267	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.97	.638	65				
Expectations for Student Performance	Made AYP	4.86	.750	203	1.96	264	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.64	.875	63				
Differentiated Instruction	Made AYP	5.03	.662	203	1.98	264	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.83	.812	63				
Improvement Program Coherence	Made AYP	4.87	.692	204	1.94	267	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.68	.584	65				
Peer Reviewed Practice	Made AYP	4.24	1.13	202	2.44	265	$p < .01$	.34
	Did not	3.83	1.27	65				
Coordinated Curriculum	Made AYP	4.92	.853	204	2.47	267	$p < .01$	.35
	Did not	4.63	.846	65				
Technical Resources	Made AYP	4.95	.838	204	.683	267	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	5.03	.790	65				

Middle schools. For the Corrective Action middle schools, the average scores on the MSCI scales for the education professionals at schools that made AYP were significantly higher than education professionals at schools that did not make AYP in the areas of Expectations for Students Performance, Peer Reviewed Practice, Improvement Program Coherence, and Technical Resources. These differences and associated significance testing information and effect sizes are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *The t Test Values, α Levels, and Cohen's d Values Associated with the Differences Between MSCI Means for Corrective Action Middle Schools that Made and Did Not Make AYP in 2004*

Scale	Did or did not make AYP in 2004	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size	t test value	df	p value	d
Equity of Practice	Made AYP	5.03	.631	81	1.62	147	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.90	.780	347				
Expectations for Student Performance	Made AYP	4.78	.729	81	2.78	150	$p < .01$	.32
	Did not	4.53	.942	346				
Differentiated Instruction	Made AYP	4.86	.628	81	2.18	164	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.68	.890	346				
Improvement Program Coherence	Made AYP	5.02	.565	81	5.02	166	$p < .01$	.55
	Did not	4.63	.809	347				
Peer Reviewed Practice	Made AYP	4.39	1.16	81	2.49	423	$p < .01$	.32
	Did not	4.00	1.30	344				
Coordinated Curriculum	Made AYP	4.80	.843	81	2.14	145	$p > .01$	---
	Did not	4.56	1.06	347				
Technical Resources	Made AYP	4.80	.808	81	3.60	147	$p < .01$	.41
	Did not	4.43	1.03	347				

Parent Survey

When parents responded to the Parent Survey, they reacted using a 1 to 4 scale to items that solicited information in five different categories: (a) communication between parents and teachers (Items 1 – 6), (b) celebration of student successes (Item 7), (c) requests for parent input (Items 8 – 10), (d) communication between parents and the school (Items 11 & 12), and (e) parent involvement in school events (Items 13 – 16). For each set of items, the number of parents responding, the means per item for each combination of school level and AYP condition, the probability associated with the mean difference between those schools that made AYP and those that did not, and Cohen's d (Cohen, 1977), if appropriate, are presented in a table. If the probability of the mean difference was less than .05, it was judged to be a significant difference. The responses of elementary school parents were higher than middle school parents on 14 of the 16 items.

Whether the parents' perceptions are related to the frequency of actual events is not known. Surveys distributed to parents at one of the participating schools were not returned to AEL researchers.

Communication between parents and teachers. Items 1 through 6 requested information from parents regarding their communication with the teacher (or teachers) of their student(s). In general, the average rating responses to these items were high (i.e., approached 4)

and parents of elementary school students generally had higher average ratings. Summary information for the Items 1 through 6 is presented in Table 7.

At the elementary school level there was a significant difference in the average response to Item 4 (i.e., prompt return of phone calls) was observed with those parents of students in elementary schools that made AYP giving lower ratings than parents of elementary students in schools not making AYP, $t(103.629^2) = -2.099, p = .038$. The effect size associated with this difference would be judged to be medium to small based on Cohen's $d = .41$.

In contrast, parents of students attending middle schools that made AYP had significantly higher ratings on Item 4, $t(48.513) = 2.393, p = .021$, as well as Item 3 (i.e., convenient conference times), $t(58.146) = 3.137, p = .003$, and Item 5 (i.e., made to feel welcome), $t(63.768) = 2.366, p = .021$. Cohen's d values for these items were .99, 1.18, and .85 respectively, values all judged to be large (i.e., greater than .80).

Table 7. Number of Parents Responding, Means, and Standard Deviations for each School Level for Parent Survey Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	Made AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Did Not Make AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
1. My child's teacher periodically updates me on my child's progress.	Elementary	82	3.73	66	3.68	.640	---
	Middle	33	3.36	204	3.07	.136	---
2. When the school year began, I received tips from my child's teacher(s) regarding how I could help him/her (them) be more effective.	Elementary	79	3.66	64	3.52	.273	---
	Middle	33	3.21	204	3.15	.761	---
3. Parent conferences are scheduled at convenient times for me.	Elementary	79	3.59	65	3.38	.93	---
	Middle	33	3.52	200	3.09	.003*	1.18
4. My child's teacher(s) promptly returns phone calls.	Elementary	71	3.65	62	3.85	.038*	0.41
	Middle	31	3.55	193	3.20	.021*	0.99
5. My child's teacher(s) makes me feel I am welcome to visit my child's classroom.	Elementary	79	3.87	65	3.86	.879	---
	Middle	33	3.82	202	3.59	.021*	0.85

² The degrees of freedom associated with some of the tests of significance are not whole numbers because the variance between the two groups was not always homogeneous and appropriate corrections in the significance test calculation and interpretation procedures was made.

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	Made AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Did Not Make AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
6. My child's teacher(s) has encouraged me to become a trained volunteer in my child's classroom.	Elementary	74	2.96	62	3.03	.687	---
	Middle	30	2.57	188	2.48	.724	---

Celebration of student successes. Item 7 asked parents to indicate the extent to which student successes were celebrated at their child's school. Again, elementary parents indicated high levels of agreement that students were congratulated for high-quality work (i.e., $M = 3.79$) with middle school parents responding with a somewhat lower average rating (i.e., $M = 3.32$). Summary information for the item is presented in Table 8.

Parents of students attending elementary schools that made AYP had significantly higher ratings on Item 7, $t(85.205) = 2.323$, $p = .023$, than parents of students at schools not making AYP. The same was found at the middle school level, $t(48.063) = 2.062$, $p = .045$, respectively. Cohen's d at the elementary level was a medium effect size (i.e., .51) and was large at the middle school level (i.e., .86).

Table 8. Number of Parents Responding, Means, and Standard Deviations for each School Level for Parent Survey Item 7

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Not AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
7. Students at my child's school are congratulated for high-quality work.	Elementary	80	3.89	62	3.66	.023*	0.51
	Middle	30	3.57	185	3.28	.045*	0.86

Requests for parent input. Parents at both levels were asked to respond to Items 8, 9, and 10 that addressed the extent to which the school requested parent involvement in planning and/or evaluating education matters in the school and/or district. In general, the responses of elementary school parents were higher on the average than those of middle school parents on Items 9 and 10 but slightly lower on Item 8. Summary information for the item is presented in Table 9.

At the elementary school level there was a significant difference in the average responses to Item 8 (i.e., annual survey of parents) and Item 9 (i.e., involves parents in planning and evaluating) with parents of students in elementary schools that made AYP giving higher ratings than parents with students in schools not making AYP, $t(106.438) = 3.659$, $p < .001$, and $t(137) = 2.836$, $p = .005$, respectively. The effect size associated with the difference observed for Item 8 was medium to large based on Cohen's $d = .71$. For Item 9, Cohen's d was .49, a medium effect.

On Items 8 and 10, differences in average ratings given by middle school parents with students at schools that made AYP versus those the did not were found to be significant: $t(208) = 2.378, p = .043$, for Item 8 and $t(58.155) = 4.063, p = .001$, for Item 10. The associated Cohen's d values were .40 (a medium to small effect) for Item 8 and 1.52 (a large effect) for Item 10.

Table 9. *Number of Parents Responding, Means, and Standard Deviations for each School Level for Parent Survey Items 8, 9, and 10*

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	Made AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Did Not Make AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
8. Parents are surveyed annually regarding education matters related to my child's school and/or district.	Elementary	69	3.45	59	2.86	.001*	0.71
	Middle	31	3.52	179	3.17	.043*	0.40
9. My child's school regularly involves parents in planning and evaluating school goals and objectives.	Elementary	75	3.47	64	3.02	.005*	0.49
	Middle	32	3.47	191	3.18	.107	---
10. The principal of my child's school regularly and systematically meets with parents.	Elementary	77	3.68	61	3.51	.212	---
	Middle	31	3.58	184	2.96	.001*	1.52

Communication between parents and the school. Items 11 and 12 on the Parent Survey requested parents to rate relative communication between parents and the school. Parents of students at both levels gave low ratings on the average (i.e., $M = 2.43$ at the elementary level and $M = 2.49$ at the middle school level) regarding whether they had heard school representatives speaking about the school at meetings in the community, though there was considerable variability among the ratings given (i.e., $SD = 1.172$ and 1.169 , respectively). On the other hand, the elementary school parents responded with higher average ratings ($M = 3.51$) regarding the regular receipt of a school newsletter; middle school parents responded less positively on the average to this item ($M = 2.86$). Summary information for the items is presented in Table 10.

On Item 12 at the elementary school level, parents of students attending schools that attained AYP gave significantly lower ratings on the average than parents of students attending schools not making AYP, $t(139.549) = -2.935, p = .004$. The effect size of .50 for the observed mean difference would be judged to be medium.

Table 10. Number of Parents Responding, Means, and Standard Deviations for each School Level for Parent Survey Items 11 and 12

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	Made AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Did Not Make AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
11. I have heard representatives of my child's school speak about my child's school to my civic organization, church, or at other community meetings I have attended.	Elementary	69	2.45	58	2.41	.866	---
	Middle	28	2.61	172	2.47	.552	---
12. My child's school regularly sends me a newsletter.	Elementary	81	3.35	63	3.71	.004*	0.50
	Middle	30	2.80	198	2.87	.738	---

Parent involvement in school events. Parent participation in school events was assessed with Items 13 through 16. These items asked parents to rate their involvement in Open House or PTA/O activities. Parent involvement ratings were found to vary by school level and, to some extent, by the AYP status of the school. Parents of elementary students rated their involvement as being somewhat higher on the average across the four items than middle school parents. Summary information for the items is presented in Table 11.

At the elementary school level for Items 13 and 16 there was a significant difference in the average response; parents of students attending schools that made AYP rated the items lower on the average than did parents with students in non-AYP schools, $t(142.603) = -3.063$, $p = .003$, and $t(143) = -2.077$, $p = .040$, respectively. The effect sizes would be judged to be medium (Cohen's $d = .52$) for Item 13 and medium to small for Item 16 (Cohen's $d = .35$.)

In contrast, parents of students attending middle schools that made AYP gave significantly higher ratings on the average for Item 14 (i.e., Open House was positive and informative), $t(45.023) = 2.115$, $p = .040$. Cohen's d value of .90 associated with the difference would be judged to be large.

Table 11. *Number of Parents Responding, Means, and Standard Deviations for each School Level for Parent Survey Items 13, 14, 15, and 16*

Item	Level	<i>n</i>	Made AYP Mean	<i>n</i>	Did Not Make AYP Mean	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
13. I attend Open Houses at my child's school.	Elementary	79	3.08	66	3.53	.003*	0.52
	Middle	32	3.09	202	2.85	.229	---
14. Open House at my child's school is an informative and positive experience.	Elementary	74	3.69	64	3.83	.146	---
	Middle	31	3.68	186	3.38	.040*	0.90
15. I attend three or more school-sponsored, parent-driven special events at my child's school each year.	Elementary	79	3.22	65	3.51	.061	---
	Middle	31	3.00	197	2.77	.292	---
16. I am actively involved in the parent/teacher organization at my child's school.	Elementary	81	2.76	64	3.06	.040*	0.35
	Middle	33	2.64	196	2.50	.528	---

Survey Summary

The survey findings showed teachers' responses at Corrective Action schools making AYP and those not making AYP were not statistically different on most scales of the CSIQ and the MSCI. However, on the Purposeful Student Assessment scale of the CSIQ, both elementary and middle school teachers responded significantly higher on the average if they were from schools that made AYP than if they were not, indicating student assessment data are collected and used to inform instruction and decision making at the school. In addition, teachers at middle schools that made AYP (compared to those at schools not making AYP) recorded significantly higher scores on the Learning Culture scale (i.e., the extent to which the school emphasizes learning) and the Shared Goals for Learning scale (i.e., the degree to which shared goals affect what is taught and how teachers teach). On the MSCI, both elementary and middle schools that made AYP were rated higher by their teachers on the Peer Reviewed Practice, meaning teachers were more likely to report working with other teachers and that their schools' curriculums were most likely to be coordinated within and across grade levels at the school. At the elementary level, the Coordinated Curriculum scale reflected that teachers at the schools making AYP address the coordination of curriculum within and across grade levels at the school. At the Middle school level, the teachers at the AYP schools were higher on the Expectations for Students Performance scale which reflects teacher expectations of the students and their beliefs that all students can perform well academically and the Improvement Program Coherence scale which pertains to improvement initiatives that a school might undertake. The Technical Resources scale also reflected differences between the two school categories at the middle school

level with the schools making AYP indicated that staff had the resources necessary to achieve instructional objectives.

On the Parent Survey, a number of significant differences in average responses were found between parents of students attending schools that made AYP versus those whose students attended schools that did not make AYP. For example, evidence was found that, at the middle school level, parents of students at schools making AYP responded more positively on the average regarding communication between parents and teachers and the value of Open House than did parents of students at schools not attaining AYP. In addition, parents of students at both elementary and middle schools attaining AYP were more likely to respond positively regarding celebration of student successes and requests for parent input. Interestingly, at the elementary level, there was also evidence that parents at schools not making AYP responded more positively regarding the provision of a newsletter by the school, attendance at Open House, and involvement in parent/teacher organizations.

Interviews

The results of each research question are addressed separately. Key features that differentiate Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 from those that did not are identified and these results are also reported separately where differences were found.

Aligned and Balanced Curriculum

Interview Question #5: How do you make sure that your students have learned the content necessary to be successful on the state assessments?

In general, responses to the above interview question fit into four broad categories: (1) informal assessment, (2) formal assessment (3) guided curriculum, and (4) strategic planning. For this question, the categories are listed in order, beginning with the most frequent response.

Informal assessment. Teachers and administrators from Corrective Action schools indicated using various assessment tools to help them know when students master skills. Teachers also expressed the importance of assessing students regularly to determine skill level. One teacher said, “I assess them informally as I go through the concepts to make sure they are following me.” The results of assessment tests are used to guide instruction—determining whether skills need to be retaught. An elementary school teacher said, “We use mock assessments that are patterned after the state assessments that give us a picture of where they [the students] really are.” Middle school teachers made the following comments: “Throughout the year we have the assessment exams...[and] between testing I can determine where their weaknesses are” and “Through informal questioning I can work with them and see if they understand the skill I am teaching—and if not, then of course you reteach.” Another middle school teacher remarked, “We have a variety of assessment tools. Generally it might just be

discussion in the classroom. It might be a quiz, it might be a project; it just depends on what assessment I am trying to squeeze in.” Finally, an elementary school teacher made the following statement: “Review, review, review, assess, and reteach.”

Formal assessment. Teachers from Corrective Action schools also indicated they rely on formal assessment tools (i.e., Student Performance Indicators [SPIs], ThinkLink, DIBELS) to help ensure student proficiency. Computer-based proficiency tests linked to educational programs and data sources are administered regularly at Corrective Action schools to measure students’ academic progress. Some teachers reported the use of SPIs as a way to gauge skill levels. “We use our SPIs and we do testing geared to the SPIs,” said one teacher. Another teacher commented, “We keep a chart with students’ names, and we are asked to give them tests on all the SPIs at various intervals.” One middle school teacher replied, “I give pretests all the time. We’ll give a pretest before I teach a lesson in the SPI. I give pretests maybe once every 3 weeks, whenever I’m introducing a new unit, just to see how much they know.”

Corrective Action elementary school teachers said they use computer-based programs like ThinkLink and PASS, and other programs such as DIBELS and River Deep, to assess students. One teacher said, “This year we used the ThinkLink assessment, and it gave detailed analyses of what the child’s strengths and weaknesses were.” “One thing that we do to assess how well they [students] will do on the state test is we have something called PASS test. It is predictive assessment strategies, and it is a compilation of online questions that are going to be on the [state] test,” said one teacher. Another said, “We also used DIBELS assessment this year, which is more a formal one-on-one test.” A third elementary school teacher stated, “We have a multitude of progress monitoring, benchmarking and, of course, outcome assessments. We are involved in DIBELS. DIBELS requires progress monitoring on struggling students every 2 weeks.” Other computer-based assessment tools have been employed districtwide, as another teacher reported: “The district purchased River Deep for us, which is technology based, and it’s probably the most kid-friendly technology I’ve seen yet to come down the pipe. The children can do self-teaching, self-monitoring.... It covers Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) skills.”

While most Corrective Action school respondents indicated the importance of assessing students to gauge their grasp of the curriculum, respondents from the 10 Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school years appeared to place emphasis on using *multiple* assessment tools to track student progress and offered the following comments when asked “How do you make sure that your students have learned the content necessary to be successful on the state assessments?”

We have all kinds of assessments. I will teach the skill and then test it. If they don’t do well, then we will go back and review it.

We actually do a lot of assessment throughout the school year.

We do numerous assessments.

They [teachers] give weekly tests in reading and math. We have also been part of a testing program this year called PASS; it is a predictive assessment program out of Nashville where they test the students 3 times a year—at the beginning of the year, the middle, and in the early spring.

We have a variety of assessment strategies in the classroom.

The way I make sure that the children are competent on state assessment is by reviewing the skills that have been taught through our curriculum using various other resources and then monitoring and coming back for reassessment and additional assessment or retesting as we need it.

We have a variety of assessments here at [our school].

All of the elementary Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year reported that ThinkLink was one of the tools used to assess their students. A participant from one of those schools explained, “Well I think the best way to find out [if students have learned the content] is to use the data from ThinkLink learning.” Another teacher said, “We used the ThinkLink assessment, and it gave detailed analyses of what the child’s strengths and weaknesses were.” One interviewee stated, “We have used it [ThinkLink] for 3 years, and so that’s the one that most are using to drive their day-to-day instruction.” Teachers from other Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2003-2004 offered the following statements:

We do schoolwide ThinkLink.

We do a program called ThinkLink learning that also focuses on where the needs are.

We’ve got a program here at [our school] called ThinkLink.

Guided curriculum. Teachers and administrators from Corrective Action schools also suggested that following district and closely aligned, state-prescribed curricula helps to make sure students gain the knowledge needed for successful state assessment outcomes. One middle school teacher said, “We have the curriculum from [the school district] and we have to follow that curriculum guide.” An elementary school teacher said, “We go over the curriculum because the curriculum is designed toward the state test, so we make sure that whatever is done is covered on the test.” One high school principal responded, “First of all, our curriculum is in line with the district curriculum and the state objectives. They [teachers] track objectives, and they can check them off as the students master those objectives.” Another middle school teacher replied, “The curriculum is so structured now it says this week you should be teaching this thing and that is in all of our major core disciplines.” Finally, a teacher said, “I go by the curriculum

guide given to us by [the school district], and I teach to everything that is in the curriculum guide. I make sure that they [the students] master it.”

Strategic planning. Interviews revealed that teachers and administrators from Corrective Action schools, including those that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year, used multiple resources—including but not limited to SPIs, textbooks, and the Internet—in creative ways to help ensure the inclusion of the state-recommended curricula when planning lessons.

When prompted to describe how lessons are planned, one teacher answered: “I generally go by what is in the curriculum and I look to see where I’m supposed to be and—let’s say I’m starting something new—I try to start with just general information. I go through and see what’s in the book, go through the curriculum and see what they’re supposed to have so that when we give our Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) we have to make sure that our SPIs and our objectives agree, and just say I complete the week and I haven’t gone completely through my lesson. I’ll start wherever I stopped off, or if I see that they’ve had some difficulty, I will start wherever that was to kind of clarify or give them something else they’ll have a better understanding of.” Another teacher said, “I look at the SPIs and see what it is that I need to teach them, and I look in the curriculum book and try to pace myself.”

Most lessons at Corrective Action schools are reported to have been planned collaboratively, on a weekly basis, and in grade-level groups. One teacher made the following comment: “We have what we call teams and we get together and we try to plan our lessons around the curriculum guide provided by the state and by [the district].” An elementary teacher said, “We have time here scheduled where we do grade-level meetings. We get together as a team; find different activities that we bring to our grade-level meetings to share with our coworkers.” Another elementary school teacher said, “Our lesson plans are due on Monday morning for the entire week, and we have grade-level planning.” A middle school teacher made the following comment: “We have team planning and then we have special sessions on Tuesday where we talk about reflecting and sharing.” Another elementary teacher said, “We plan weekly. Usually we plan together as a team.”

While Corrective Action school teachers reported the use of traditional resources such as textbooks, teachers’ manuals, Tennessee blueprint, and district curricula when planning their lessons, this inquiry found that less conventional resources such as the Internet and video are also being used. An elementary school teacher said, “We use our teacher resource books, the Tennessee blueprint book; we use our curriculum guides and we think about what they are going to be tested on. We bring in Internet activities and we use videos.” Another teacher responded, “We use the district curriculum, the Tennessee blueprint; we use that along with the textbook and also the Internet.”

Most Corrective Action school teachers reported that lesson plans are submitted to school administrators weekly. An elementary school teacher said, “We plan lessons weekly and they are also checked by the administration weekly.” Another teacher stated, “We submit lesson plans every week.” A principal said, “[Lesson plans are] submitted and reviewed weekly.”

Teachers' views on how they make sure that students have learned the content necessary to be successful on the state assessments can be summarized by a middle school teacher's response:

First of all, we have the objectives before us, and when I say "before us," I mean we have to be aware of those objectives, and we are to plan our lessons according to the objectives and, of course, we have various assessments—we have so many different types of assessments that we utilize to make sure that they [the students] understood each topic.

Researchers also asked study participants if teachers collaborate in preparation for lessons, units, assessments, and so on. It appears that collaboration among teachers at all Corrective Action schools provided support and helped to ensure that students received the content to succeed academically. A junior high school teacher explained, "We meet to discuss our progress, and if this teacher is doing something that is working, then we try that with our class. Sometimes what is working with your class might work with the next class." A middle school principal said, "They are a team and they meet at least once a week to discuss student achievement, parental involvement, and activities for their team." Another teacher stated, "Yes, our teachers meet in teams. Each team meets and collaborates on different ideas, different strategies, what strategy worked with this student that this teacher can receive assistance from. They talk about attendance problems, parental contact that one teacher had that another may not have had." An instructional facilitator replied, "They [teachers] have group planning. They do not plan individually. They have to get together as a grade level for planning, and they do an excellent job."

An elementary school teacher's comments appeared to summarize the viewpoints other Corrective Action school teachers had about collaboration among teachers.

We have to [collaborate] in the situation that we are in. We have to collaborate so that we can help each other. We have to support each other. We sometimes have kids come to school with many problems. We try to see what things we can do as individual teachers to help our students. We collaborate about our curriculum. How are you doing on this? Where are you at this particular point? What do you like to have the kid know before they get to you? So we have a lot of things that we collaborate on.

Purposeful Student Assessment

Interview Question #7: Do the teachers and administrators of this school view student assessment data as meaningful?

Based on interview responses, it appears that Corrective Action school interviewees viewed student data as meaningful. Respondents reported that assessment data were used to make instructional decisions, but some admit that learning to use data effectively has been a challenge. However, it appears that data were used more frequently to assess student achievement at the Corrective Action schools making AYP during the 2004-2005 school year where respondents also appeared to have a keen knowledge of data usage. The frequent use of data might have led to a better understanding of how data could be used to make more informed educational decisions at some Corrective Action schools.

Meaningful use of data. Study participants stated that student assessment data were useful to them in ascertaining which learning objectives students had mastered and which objectives required further instruction, thus allowing them to plan their lessons accordingly. As a corollary to viewing student data as meaningful, when asked if teachers and administrators use data to guide instructional decisions, respondents reported using the previous year's Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), TerraNova, and Gateway scores. Many of the schools also employ various supplementary teaching materials and assessments; ThinkLink and DIBELS were the programs most frequently mentioned. Apparently, assessments allowed teachers to gauge the strengths and needs of their students, giving the teachers time to plan and implement timely interventions where needed. Study participants said, "The student achievement data is used to determine what level of instruction you are going to be able to deliver and how fast you can move" and "That [data] is the guiding force to our instruction here. Everything we do, we have to look at that data to know where our students are and make plans to advance from that stage to the next. Without data, it is just pretty much impossible to do instructional planning and plan all of that extra intervention to help our students succeed." Regarding assessment tools, respondents said, "We take the information as we get it; we have other assessment tools that we use, and we look at how the child has done on TCAP" and "TCAP scores, that is basically the top one [assessment]." Other teachers said, "We use DIBELS to monitor their [students'] progress" and "We do the ThinkLink and we get a lot of detail about individual kids and about the class as a whole."

Learning to use data. Though teachers at every school reported the use of student data, several respondents indicated that data disaggregation and interpretation began recently in their schools and that additional professional development was needed. One teacher said, "It's been a growing process. I think now we have a much clearer picture. I mean it's not new, it shouldn't have been new, but I don't think we'd be in this predicament if we had given this deeper attention before now.... I think the staff is really beginning to see the need to look at data and study it." Another teacher said, "Once we got *on notice*, they started giving us all this information and telling us exactly why we're failing, what areas we're failing in, so now that we have this information, we take it, break it down, and review that in faculty meetings and our team meetings." An administrator stated, "Right now our teachers are still overburdened by all the numbers, by all the data, and they don't actually know where to begin with the data, so we're planning some professional development over the summer helping teachers to read all the numbers to find the most significant data and use that to guide their instruction."

Frequently used data. Some teachers from the Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 reported that data were used frequently for making educational decisions at their schools. An elementary school teacher said, “We are such a data-driven school. We analyze data until we are blue in the face.” Another teacher said, “This school is data-driven, take my word for it.” A middle school teacher said, “We use data every day.” When asked if teachers and administrators use data to guide instructional decisions, an elementary school teacher said, “Oh gosh yes. We are constantly looking at data here.” Another elementary school teacher said, “Yes, absolutely. It [data] guides our curriculum.” A middle school teacher added, “Yes, because if you have that constant data, you know where your kids are and you know where your kids need to be so that’s always good as an instructor to know exactly where you are and where you need to be and try to progress and you know to set attainable goals for your kids and for yourself.”

Effective Teaching

Interview Question #8: Does teacher practice in this school align with what you know about research on effective teaching?

Generally, Corrective Action study participants reported that most teachers at their schools practice what they believe to be research-based teaching strategies. For the most part, their teaching strategies are realized through the types of educational programs adopted by Corrective Action schools, and teachers at those schools often equate best practices with what they believe to be research-based teaching strategies. Regarding respondents’ views about research-based programs, teaching strategies, effective teaching, and how they learn about research-based strategies, researchers found no marked differences between Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year and those that did not.

Programs. Study participants said their schools have instituted various programs, ones they believe to be, research-based, as a way to increase student achievement at Corrective Action schools. “There are various research-based strategies that we use here. We use a program for our reading, which is getting a lot of exposure now,” said an elementary school teacher. Specific programs were named when some teachers talked about research-based teaching strategies. One elementary teacher said, “Yes, like those thinking maps, all of those are research based, and our after-school programs are all research based.” Another elementary school teacher said, “Absolutely, I was on the Internet looking up Move It Math, looking at Project Grad, looking at Success For All, and I pulled all the research that shows that it is effective and it does work.” An instructional facilitator replied, “Yes, research-based strategies [are being used] in conjunction with the programs that they are using; for example the math program, it is researched, and they are using the strategies that we stress.” Participants’ answers reflect what they considered to be research-based programs.

Best practices. Study participants also appeared to align their views of what they believe to be research-based teaching strategies with teacher best practices. When asked if she practiced research-based strategies, an elementary school teacher said, “Yes, I have had a lot of training in best practices.” Another teacher commented, “Absolutely, because of the 90-minute math block

and the 90-minute reading block, they are very much based on best practices so there is a lot of research, a lot of training that goes into that.” A principal made the following comment: “We also encourage teachers to look at best practices, to look at research data about good strategies to use.” When asked if teachers at his/her school practiced research-based strategies, another principal responded, “For the most part, yes. We are really headed in the right direction as far as best practices.” Participants gave detailed answers about what they thought were research-based teaching strategies.

Because Corrective Action school study participants reported that teachers at their respective schools practice what they believe to be research-based strategies, they were asked by researchers, how they learned about research-based teaching strategies. Many respondents said they received training in research-based strategies through professional development workshops. One administrator explained, “Primarily administrative professional development from the district.” A middle school teacher said, “There is a lot of professional development that we have. Basically our faculty meetings are geared towards some type of professional development that we are always being given on different kinds of strategies that we might try.”

Another middle school teacher’s comments summed up views by Corrective Action school participants regarding how knowledge about what they believe to be research-based teaching strategies is obtained.

I go to a lot of workshops. We have in-service days, and they bring a lot of people in that give us research in different areas that the administrators and teachers think that we need improvement. Also, teachers go out to different professional developments and bring information back. So not only do we have research people coming in and bring us information, we have all types of it and it is really beneficial. It makes a difference.

Respondents from Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year and those from schools that did not responded similarly when asked about who decided the content and focus of professional development at their schools. Even though some professional development is mandated by the district or state, in which case teachers said they were encouraged to participate, the most common response to the question was that the content and focus of professional development was developed collaboratively. Administrators typically suggested professional development with input from teachers. As one teacher explained, “I think it would really come down to [the principal], but we [the teachers] have a lot of input.” A middle school teacher made the following comment: “That is a collaborative effort, and that is decided by the administration. Teachers are asked to give input.” An elementary school teacher said, “A variety of people. I know that the curriculum coordinator does, and so does the instructional facilitator, and also teachers have input on that.” One principal said, “The district decides some, and I have the teachers do a self-assessment where they evaluate their personal strengths and weaknesses, and we gather their data and decide what the common threads [are] that we need to work on. So I look at the data with my administrative staff and we decide the types of

professional developments that we need.” Another middle school teacher replied, “Professional development is done through our lead teachers and facilitator in conjunction with the principal. They put together the program, but there is input by the teachers. They do surveys asking us what areas we need improvement in.”

Shared Leadership

Interview Question #9: Do teachers in this school view leadership as being shared?

A vast majority of teachers and administrators interviewed for the Corrective Action schools study said they viewed leadership at their respective schools as being shared. Two themes, strong leadership and the presence of leadership teams, emerged as evidence to support claims that leadership is shared at Corrective Action schools. Researchers found no differences in the views of respondents from Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year and those that did not.

Strong leadership. Teachers and administrators from Corrective Action schools viewed leadership as shared. Some teachers described shared leadership as having a principal who is approachable, willing to listen to the school community, and one who strikes a balance between knowing when to delegate, ask for assistance, or take the initiative on her or his own accord when the need arises. An elementary school teacher said, “I think leadership is shared. I do think the tone is set by the person that is in charge. I think our leadership frequently wants to know what we think about what we are trying to do.” Two other elementary school teachers made the following comments. One said, “[The name of the principal] has always been the leader of leaders. Certain things she mandates because, as principal, she has to. Other things she leaves open to teachers. We can go to her, and if it is for the benefit of the students, it can be done.” And the other responded, “She [the principal] does not try to make all the decisions; she is not a micromanager. She has the power to make the final decision, and that is what she should do, based on our needs. She lets us [teachers] have input on whatever we think is needed.”

Some reasons why teachers feel shared leadership is important include: “I like our leadership being shared because it gives a chance for everyone to participate. Everyone feels like they own a part of what is going on.” Another teacher said, “We definitely have shared input, and we have regular meetings so we all get to voice concerns and participate in making decisions.” An elementary school teacher made the following comment, which seemed to summarize the sentiments of other Corrective Action school teachers regarding shared leadership.

For the most part, you always have to have a strong leader, and sometimes being a strong leader means knowing when to delegate, share, or know when you just have to kind of go on your own.

The interviews revealed there were leadership roles at various levels in Corrective Action schools. When Corrective Action school teachers and administrators were asked what role the assistant principal played in the operation of the school, most responded that the main obligation of the assistant principal was to assist with disciplinary matters. A middle school teacher stated, “I am not familiar with all of his duties, but he is the right arm of the principal, and he works under her direction and he handles a lot of discipline situations.” An elementary school teacher said of the assistant principal, “She [the assistant principal] handles a lot of the discipline problems that we have.”

Researchers also asked teachers and administrations from Corrective Action schools about the role the instructional facilitator, if one was present, played in the operation of the school. It was widely reported that instructional facilitators make sure that teachers have the information, materials, and expertise needed for them to be effective educators, which also includes providing professional development and guidance for instruction. Some of their answers follow: “They [instructional facilitators] are supposed to work with teachers and help, as far as instructional resources.” A middle school teacher said, “The instructional facilitator does an excellent job with working with teachers to provide the resources that we need, and professional development has been provided by her.” An elementary school teacher responded, “She [the instructional facilitator] is helpful in getting the necessary material we need in the classroom.” Another elementary school teacher stated, “She [the instructional facilitator] makes sure that we have all the information we need to teach a particular skill, and she is also there to give us guidance if we need any other strategy or anything to teach a particular skill, if we have trouble.”

The role of lead teachers was also explored by asking about roles the lead teacher, if one was present, played in the operation of the school and what leadership roles teachers had. Researchers found that most of the schools included in this study have teachers who function as lead teachers and/or grade-level chairpersons and that, in general, there were opportunities for teachers at all levels to lead through their participation on leadership teams and other school-based committees. “They are mentors and coaches,” a middle school teacher said about team leaders. Another teacher said, “[Grade chairpersons] provide guidance.” An elementary school teacher made the following statement: “There is a grade chair for every grade-level, and we have meetings every month and we take information back to our grade level, and she [the grade chair] asked me to be in charge of our discipline committee for the next year.” A middle school teacher said, “The department chairperson is voted on by the members in the department. There are team leaders for each grade. You have other teachers who do different types of things.” Teachers typically take on leadership roles in the classroom, as one elementary school teacher explained, “I guess the biggest leadership role that teachers have is making decisions in your classroom.” Two grade school teachers made the following statements: “Naturally, within the classroom, you do [have leadership roles],” and, “If you want to be in a leadership role, I feel like you have the opportunity.”

Most Corrective Action schools have leadership councils composed of “the principal, several teachers, support staff, and a few hard-working parents,” explained one middle school teacher. When asked, “What issues does the council decide?” study participants said, “They deal with all types of issues in the school, community, and with parents,” and “The school leadership

council deals with discipline, it deals with parental involvement, and from recent memory, I think those have been the two major issues.” Another middle school teacher stated, “We have a leadership council. Teachers, parents, and students are involved in it. Currently, the issues that we are facing are the restructuring of the school, and we talk about discipline a lot in there.”

Presence of leadership teams. Administrators and teachers from Corrective Action schools also viewed leadership as shared because there were leadership teams in place at most of the schools included in this study. When asked if teachers in this school view leadership as being shared, an elementary principal replied, “Yes, we have a leadership team.” A teacher said, “We have a school leadership team; members of the instructional faculty serve on that team.”

The following statement, made by one elementary school teacher, summarized the numerous comments made by Corrective Action school teachers, supporting their beliefs that leadership is shared at their respective school.

Yes, like I said, we do have a leadership team and many of the things that are concerns, any one of us can go to a leadership member—there is the principal, the assistant principal, our curriculum coordinator, a facilitator, and two guidance counselors—so we are able to go to them if we have a concern that we would like to be addressed, and they will address it to the leadership team when they meet and, in turn, we will get a response from them on whatever results. So I believe there is highly shared leadership.

Shared Goals for Learning

Interview Question #10: Does the school have clear, focused goals that are understood by all members of the school community?

A majority of the Corrective Action study participants from the schools that made AYP in 2004, as well as those that did not, indicated that their respective schools have clear and focused goals. However, many respondents at both sets of schools reported that although goals are understood by school staff and students, getting parents and the community members to understand the schools’ goals has been a challenge. Evidence also suggests that mission statements and School Improvement Plans played a role in helping to clarify goals at some Corrective Action schools. Respondents indicated, too, that goals affect what is being taught and how teachers teach.

More parental understanding. There appears to be a need for more parental involvement in creating and understanding goals at Corrective Action schools. Two elementary school teachers made the following statements about clear and focused goals and the lack of parental understanding regarding the goals at each of their schools: “I think that the goals are

clear to those who are actively involved, and I hope that things get better, but the level of involvement from parents is low,” and “I think everybody that works in this school knows all of our goals. I think all the kids that go to this school are aware of the goals. I don’t think that our parents fully understand the goals.”

Better community understanding. Respondents also reported that the geographic communities in the neighborhoods where Corrective Action schools are located do not fully understand the schools’ goals. One middle school teacher explained, “Yes, I think we have clear focused goals. As far as the community goes, basically, we do not have many outside visitors coming in. I do not think they really understand what the goals are.” Another middle school teacher said, “I believe the school’s goals and mission and all of that are clear. Now, as far as the community at large, they still have not completely bought into it, even though we are constantly putting the word out there.”

Respondents indicated that the School Improvement Plan (SIP) played a major role in establishing clear and focused goals at Corrective Action schools. Grade school teachers made the following comments: “It [the SIP] gives us direction, a clear goal,” and “[The SIP] targets those things that we need to work on. It makes very clear those weaknesses that we need to improve and kind of gives us more focus.” A middle school teacher said, “The School Improvement Plan is a guide that we use to keep us on track.” Another middle school teacher said, “It [the SIP] is almost like our blueprint. It tells us exactly how we are going to get the job done, and it takes us step by step through the different areas that we will be focusing on, and it tells us how we are going to achieve a certain goal.” A high school principal commented, “The School Improvement Plan is really our map to success. It identifies those areas and goals that we need to improve in.” A middle school principal said, “The School Improvement Plan helped to focus the goals.”

Corrective Action study participants were asked if the schools’ goals affected what is taught and how teachers teach and a majority of them stated that goals do affect what is taught. An elementary school teacher made the following statement: “Yes, by and large, because all of our professional development activities are geared towards supporting what those goals are.” A middle school teacher responded, “Yes, everyone should be teaching towards our goals.” Another middle school teacher said, “Yes, I think so. I think we are all in agreement as far as where we want the school to go. We all want to get off this list and what I have seen is that all the teachers have worked very hard to teach their children effectively and do what they need to do.”

Mission statements. Respondents from Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 proclaimed that their schools’ mission statements also helped them to focus on and clarify goals. Some of their comments follow:

We rewrote our mission statement and everyone has it posted in the room, and we’ve made it clear to the students what are mission is. It’s posted on the Web site and parents are encouraged to check it out and give feedback on it.

We have our mission, everybody knows the goals, and everybody is working towards the goals. We have a clear focus.

We have a mission statement, we do have it posted in the hallway that states the goals of the school and the purpose that we have for the student body.

Yes, I do, because we hear it a lot...our mission statement is repeated every morning on the morning announcement.

We have a mission statement which states the purpose of the existence of [name of school].

Teachers and administrators from schools that did not make AYP were less effusive regarding the role of their mission statements in helping them focus on and clarify goals.

Learning Culture

Interview Question #11: How does this school encourage learning by staff and students?

There appeared to be a variety of programs in place at Corrective Action schools to promote and encourage learning by staff. Respondents revealed, however, that they are encouraged to learn primarily through professional development. Some respondents have also been encouraged, by school administrators, to continue their education by attending graduate school classes or obtaining a master's degree. Study participants also reported that creative methods like incentive programs and student recognition were used to encourage learning by students.

Professional development. Professional development has played an important role in helping Corrective Action school staff learn new ways of educating students. Respondents admitted that they seek out educational opportunities and agreed that their respective schools do a good job of providing the resources needed to learn new skills. One elementary school principal said, "I think it [learning] is a top priority for the teachers and the staff members. I have always placed a strong emphasis on professional development. I think the teachers are interested in their own growth and development, as well as helping guide the children in the right direction." An elementary teacher remarked, "Yes, we are encouraged to go to staff developments; we are encouraged to go to different trainings so that we can help the kids." A middle school teacher said, "I think it [learning] is encouraged. Teachers are always going to professional developments and picking up new ideas, even older teachers like me; it is a new generation and new ideas are coming up all the time." Another middle school teacher said, "We have a vast amount of professional development activities at our disposal." An administrator replied, "We always encourage professional development, not just in-house but anytime there are

workshops, conferences, or anything that's offered, whether within the district or outside. We make sure we let teachers know."

Respondents were also asked if their professional development was on target and meaningful. Most indicated that it was, for the most part, and gave a variety of reasons as evidence to support their views. However, respondents found that they received more from professional development that addressed their specific needs or the needs of their school, as one elementary school teacher explained, "I feel that the professional development that is offered is meaningful, especially the ones that we get to choose. They [administrators] oftentimes pick professional developments for us that they feel like we need, but there are also opportunities where we get to pick things that we are interested in. Those things are particularly useful." Another teacher said, "At this point, they [professional developments] have to be [meaningful]. I would say we have not had a 'yawner' in about 2 years. The school is able to look inward and design our own that meet our needs."

Continuing education. Because of new credentialing criteria mandated by the No Child left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, some Corrective Action school teachers have been encouraged to continue their education by obtaining master's degrees. A junior high school principal said, "Many of our teachers are encouraged by President Bush's NCLB, if you are not highly qualified in the content area you are teaching. You have to be highly qualified." Two elementary school teachers replied, "They [administrators] encourage teachers to go on and get their master's; they are real encouraging about that." "It [learning] is encouraged. Like I said, I just finished my master's. We have three teachers right now that are in the same master's program I did with our literacy leader. I know it [learning] is definitely encouraged and it is supported, very much so." Another teacher said, "We have a variety of teachers who are currently in school. Our administration obviously encourages that."

As mentioned above, there appeared to be a variety of programs put into place at Corrective Action schools to promote and support learning by teachers. When asked if their school provided formal orientation and mentoring for new teachers, respondents indicated that their respective schools either provided a formal mentoring program for new teachers or that new teachers received mentoring from the district or state. No evidence was found suggesting that any of the Corrective Action schools that participated in this study had formal orientation programs in place. Orientation appeared to be a by-product of the mentoring activities that took place at the schools. One elementary school teacher stated, "Yes, we do [have a mentoring program], we have seven teachers on staff that provide mentoring." Another teacher said, "Most of our senior teachers are mentors; I am one. I mentor for new teachers for the first three years. We have in-house teachers that we monitor and talk with in the afternoons and anytime they need to be helped. We try to get them in the right direction." Regarding the mentoring program at the district or state level, an elementary school teacher said, "Yes, we have a really good mentoring program that is associated with [school district] and the [university]. We have a mentor who comes in our classrooms once a week and she will go over things." A middle school teacher said of the mentoring program, "Well it is not just limited to [the School]. It is throughout the state. I am a certified Tennessee mentor. We take on new teachers, we are assigned to someone, and there are lots of different activities that you should go through."

Another middle school teacher added, “There is one [a mentoring program] outside of the school at the teaching and learning academy.”

Creative ways to encourage students. “I think teachers take on the responsibility of making sure their classes know that learning is important and that is what we are here for,” said one elementary school teacher when asked if the school encouraged learning by students. Corrective Action school teachers and administrators used a variety of approaches in an effort to motivate students to learn. Respondents reported that one way they encouraged learning by students was to show them how education relates to life. An elementary school teacher said, “Practically every day we are trying to tell them or even show them how this [education] is going to help them later on in life.” Another elementary school teacher replied, “We really want the kids to know how important an education [is] to their future, as a way out. I think we really, really strive to show them what a good education is.” A middle school teacher said, “I incorporate real-life situations all the time within the classroom.”

It was also reported that incentives were used at Corrective Action schools to encourage learning by students. Two elementary school teachers made the following comments: “We have awards within our classrooms. I feel like we have to give a lot of incentives here to encourage the kids,” and “We have a type of store where kids earn bucks [for] homework and the behavior, and they get to go to the store once a month and purchase items that are donated.” A middle school teacher said, “We give pencils, we give bookmarks, we do these kinds of things all the time for our students to encourage them to want to be successful.”

According to respondents, student recognition helped to encourage learning. An elementary school teacher responded, “We have celebrations, we have morning rituals. Morning announcements are actually celebrations. Students are consistently and constantly coming to adults to show off their work and being celebrated.” Another teacher said, “Children like to see good work posted on the walls. They like recognition, not just handing back their papers; they like a pat on the back—I mean, literally, a pat on the back.”

Finally, it was reported that students are encouraged to learn when teachers make education interesting. One middle school teacher said, “We encourage our students to learn, I think, by offering them a curriculum that is rich—one that is interesting and inviting.” Another middle school teacher stated, “First of all, I try to make sure, even though it is part of the curriculum, as the teacher—this is where my creativity comes in—I have to be able to tie it [the curriculum] to what they know, to what they understand, to what they see, and something that they can feel.”

School/Family/Community Connections

Interview Question #12: Are parents/family and community members involved in and feel part of the school?

There appeared to be no differences in the views regarding parent involvement between the Corrective Action schools that made AYP during the 2003-2004 school year and those that did not. Though some of the respondents reported an increase in parent involvement during the current school year, respondents from all Corrective Action schools said that more parent/family involvement was needed. Moreover, the lack of parent/family involvement in the students' education was most frequently cited by respondents as a barrier to learning. On the other hand, study participants from Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 reported a higher level of involvement from the community than those that did not.

Parental involvement. Regarding parent involvement, one respondent replied, "There isn't a lot of parental involvement. Last night, we had what is called a Family Reading Night, and there were more students here than parents. There doesn't seem to be enough outrage over poor performance from the parents. There seems to be a lot of parents who don't know that their child is even making the grade until the end of the year." Another teacher said, "Children don't feel motivated when the parents are not involved. They do not feel that anyone cares enough about them for them to care about school."

Many of the Corrective Action schools have employed parent liaisons and/or family specialists in the effort to gain more parent involvement in the schools, with varying degrees of success. Researchers asked study respondents if parents volunteer to serve as aides in the classroom and several respondents at the elementary school level reported instances of parents volunteering in their classrooms. One respondent explained, "There are some parents who do volunteer. I have one mother that is really good. Anytime that I need her she will come up here. I wish that we had more mothers like that." A middle school teacher said, "I find that happens in the lower grades but not that much in the upper grades." Another elementary school teacher said "We do have parents that volunteer but of course I would like to see more."

Community involvement. Almost all of the respondents interviewed made reference to community organizations, such as churches or businesses, that offered support to the school. Approximately half of the schools had formal "School Adopters"; organizations offering financial and physical support to the school. For example, several of the schools' adopters have representatives who come to the school after hours and on Saturdays to offer free tutoring to the students. Of the schools that did not specifically make reference to school adopters, all except one stated that various neighborhood organizations offered tutoring and financial support. Only one school's respondents stated that they did not have the support of any outside organizations. Respondents made the following statements about community involvement:

[Name of a major company] is one of our [adopters] and they have established clubs for the students; I personally think they do a good job. They are able to work with these kids without the teachers to take them on field trips.

People actually come in and work with our students on character, and just about life, and teaching them that they can succeed.

We are thinking next year about doing a church bulletin-sized flyer that we can send to churches that they can put inside their church bulletins.

Even the Mom & Pop grocery stores around here [name of store] have donated cheerleading uniforms this year. She [store owner] told us to send her the bill.

We have [name of business]; they're not involved in a formal situation, but they come over and assist with coaching, mentoring, and they provide athletic equipment.

The federal correctional institution...provides training facilities for our staff, staff development, and they have their inmates come out and share with our kids about problems they developed in their lives.

[Name of business] is right around the corner; they come and not only do they contribute financially to the school, but they will send representatives from their church to speak with the students...and also to help motivate the parents into becoming involved in the school.

Interview Summary

The interviews revealed that teachers at the Corrective Action schools that made AYP and those at schools that did not make AYP shared some things in common but not others. Teachers at both sets of schools reported following district/state standards aligned curricula and employing school-wide strategic planning as embodied in the School Improvement Plan to focus instruction. Most reported using what they believe to be research-based teaching strategies and indicated having clear, focused goals though getting parents and the community members involved was a challenge. In contrast, teachers at Corrective Action schools that made AYP reported frequent assessments, particularly multiple assessments including computer based assessments, to gauge student achievement and to track student progress. In addition, they were more likely to report use of those data to make instructional decisions. While lack of parent/family support was frequently cited as a barrier to learning by all teachers, those at the Corrective Action schools that made AYP reported a higher level of parental involvement than those Corrective Action schools not making AYP.

Documents

Documents developed at Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 and those that did not were found to be consistent with those found at most schools. For instance, almost all schools have mission statements and attendance policies, as did the Corrective Action Schools. Most schools reported attempts to engage parents and the community through newsletters and regular mailings on events held at the school and had documentation that reflected such activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The Corrective Action schools studied, whether they had achieved AYP or not, shared similarities. The evidence gained in this investigation indicates that all the Corrective Action Schools studies stated that their mission statements played a role in establishing clear and focused goals that were articulated in school improvement plans and reflected in what was taught in classrooms. Further, the schools generally indicated that the goals were understood by students and staff. Leadership of the school was typically identified as being shared, at least to some extent, and being a function of having a strong principal who understands how to delegate responsibilities and a leadership team that helps to make educational decisions at the school. In addition, the schools' curricula were typically reported to be aligned with state standards and as being implemented in accordance with district guidelines. There is also evidence from all the schools that pacing instruction was a key aspect of preparing students for the state assessment and that it was typically accomplished by the use of district curriculum guides closely aligned with state objectives and by collaboratively planned lessons.

However, disparities between schools that made AYP and those that did not make AYP were uncovered. For instance, evidence was accumulated that indicated differences did exist between Corrective Action schools that made AYP and those that did not occurred in purposeful student assessment, in some aspects of the learning culture of the school, in family and community connections with the school, and in parents' perceptions of the school.

Purposeful Student Assessment

One area of difference found between Corrective Action schools that made AYP and those that did not was how they conducted student assessment and used those data. Both teacher and administrator interviews and survey data indicated that teachers in the Corrective Action schools that achieved AYP were more likely to employ multiple measures of student performance than were Corrective Action schools that had not achieved AYP. These measures included both informal assessments through questioning and observation and formal assessments through computerization like ThinkLink and PASS test and other assessment tools (e.g., DIBELS and River Deep). It is interesting to note that each of the elementary Corrective Action schools that made AYP in 2004 used ThinkLink as one of their assessment programs. It is also noteworthy that at least a few teachers at all schools indicated a need for additional professional development regarding purposeful student assessment and its use in planning meaningful instruction.

Learning Culture

There is both interview and survey evidence that the learning cultures of the Corrective Action schools is generally positive. Teachers and administrators reported that their schools had high expectations for teachers and students and that students were recognized for their accomplishments. It was consistently reported in all of the Corrective Action schools that teachers were provided professional development opportunities that were typically meaningful

and job related. However, survey data did reveal that at the Corrective Action schools that made AYP, teachers were more likely to report being engaged in peer reviewed practice within the context of a coherent program of improvement than were teachers at Corrective Action schools that did not make AYP.

School/Family/Community Connections

Though not supported by survey data, teachers and administrators at Corrective Action schools that made AYP reported that they have benefited from increased levels of community involvement with their schools. All Corrective Actions schools, whether they made AYP or not, have reported that families were typically not engaged in the education of the children attending their schools despite increased efforts on their part to increase that involvement. In addition, all stated that their schools' goals did not appear to be understood by parents/families and geographical communities surrounding their schools.

Parent Perceptions

The survey data did reveal a number of differences between parents of students attending schools that made AYP versus those whose students attend AYP attaining schools that suggest positive steps that schools might take to involve parents in the schooling of their children. Survey responses of parents of students in school making AYP would suggest that reaching out to parents through such things as parent surveys serves to foster improved communication with parents and to make them feel more of a part of the school and less like outsiders. Celebration of student successes is also a positive factor in how parents view schools. Interestingly, at the elementary level, there was also evidence that parents at schools not making AYP responded more positively regarding the provision of a newsletter by the school, attendance at Open House, and involvement in parent/teacher organizations. Findings such as these suggest additional research is necessary to attain a more complete assessment of factors that affect parents perception of low-performing schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this inquiry suggest the following:

- Teachers in Corrective Action schools should engage in purposeful student assessment (i.e., informal and formal multiple assessments) to gain timely and appropriate student achievement data.
- Teachers should use purposefully conducted assessments of student learning in making instructional decisions to assist students in the learning process.
- Computerization assessment programs (e.g., ThinkLink) if used regularly, may assist teachers in gauging student achievement level and can help with pacing of instruction.
- Teachers should engage in peer-reviewed practice within the context of a coherent program of teaching/learning improvement.
- Teachers and administrators should work to improve communication with parents by doing such things scheduling parent conferences at times convenient to parents and returning phone calls promptly to make them feel more of a part of the school and less like outsiders.
- Teachers and administrators should reach out to parents through parent surveys, systematic meetings with parents, and regular involvement in planning and evaluating school goals and objectives.
- Additional research should be conducted to focus on the direct observation of instruction and operation of Corrective Action schools to better determine programs and practices that assist schools in achieving AYP.

REFERENCES

- AEL. (2002). *Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ)*. Charleston, WV: Author.
- Cohen, J. (1977). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (revised edition). New York: Academic Press.
- Education Trust. (1999). *Dispelling the myth: High-poverty schools exceeding expectations*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Education Trust. (2001). Closing the gap: Done in a decade. *Thinking K-16*, 5(2), 3-22.
- Edvantia. (2005). *Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI)*. Charleston, WV: Author.
- Ellis, S., Gaudet, R., Hoover, M., Rizoli, C. K., & Mader, M. (2004). *Case studies and cross-case analysis of promising practices in selected urban public school districts in Massachusetts*. Hadley, MA: University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute.
- Hair, D., Kraft, B., & Allen, A. (2001). *National Staff Development Council Project ADVANCE mini-grant: Louisiana Staff Development Council's end of grant report*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Staff Development Council.
- Intercultural Development Research Association. (1997). *High-poverty, high-performing schools*. San Antonio, TX: Author.
- Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly. (2004). *Review of factors and practices associated with school performance in Virginia*. Richmond, VA: Author.
- Just for the Kids. (2001). *Promising practices: How high-performing schools in Texas get results*. Austin, TX: Author.
- Kannapel, P. J., & Clements, S. K. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools: A report from the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence*. Lexington, KY: The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.
- McGee, G. (2004). Closing Illinois' achievement gap: Lessons from the "golden spike" high-poverty high-performing schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 9(2), 97-125.
- Picucci, A., Brownson, A., Kahlert, R., & Sobel, A. (2002). *Driven to succeed: High-performing, high-poverty, turnaround middle schools. Volume I: Cross-case analysis of high-performing, high-poverty, turnaround middle schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Reeves, D. B. (2000). *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning organizations*. Denver, CO: Center for Performance Assessment.

Trimble, S. (2002). Common elements of high-performing, high-poverty middle schools. *Middle School Journal*, 33(4), 7-16.

U. S. Department of Education. (1999). *Hope for urban education: A study of nine high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

Washington State Department of Education. (2005). *What makes a school successful? Common characteristics of high-performing schools*. Retrieved September, 2005, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement/success.aspx>

Appendix A:
Interview Questions

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____. I am a (Research & Evaluation Specialist/Research Associate/Research Assistant/Research Consultant/other) with AEL, the Appalachia Regional Laboratory in Charleston, West Virginia. We are conducting a series of research studies in High Priority Schools in association with the Tennessee Department of Education. We would like to talk with you for about 30 minutes regarding several aspects of your school. In order to facilitate the timely completion of our interview, I would like your permission to tape record our conversation. The tape will be transcribed for data analysis purposes and no one other than the individual doing the transcription and I will listen to the tape recording. Once the transcript is completed, the data from all the interviews will be summarized aggregated so that it will not be possible to attribute the comments you make to you.

Before we begin the interview, I have a consent form for you to read and sign. When you are finished, please sign the consent form and the copy. You will retain a copy of the form, as will I.

We have lots of things we would like to know about your school so we will move as quickly as possible through the questions. However, please try to be as complete in your answers as possible.

Background Questions

1. How long have you taught at this school?
2. Did you teach at any other school or schools before you came here?
3. What grade/content area do you teach?
4. Have you always taught at that grade level/in that content area?

**Interview Questions for
Tennessee Restructuring 1 Improving and Restructuring 2 Schools Study**

Aligned and Balanced Curriculum

5. How do you make sure that your students have learned the content necessary to be successful on the state assessments?

(Possible follow-ups: Do you use a pacing guide to make sure you cover all the material/concepts? Do you plan time to review and prepare for the test?)

Please Note: Listen carefully, but don't ask, for statements about the students not being ready or not being able to learn what they are expected to learn in that grade level/subject.

6. Describe how you plan your lessons.

(Possible follow-ups: Do you plan your lessons weekly? Daily? What resources do you use to plan your lessons? Textbooks? Tennessee Blueprint? District curriculum? Teacher manuals? Supplementary materials? Is there a format or template that you follow when planning lessons?)

Purposeful Student Assessment

7. Do the teachers and administrators of this school view student assessment data as meaningful?
If "no," why do you think that is the case?
If "yes," what evidence can you give to support that view?

(Possible follow-ups: Do teachers and administrators use data to guide instructional decisions? If "no," why do you think that is the case? If "yes," what evidence can you give to support that view?)

Effective Teaching

8. Does teacher practice in this school align with what you know about the research on effective teaching?
If "no," why do you think that is the case?
If "yes," can you give me an example?

(Possible follow-ups: How do you learn about research based teaching strategies? Who decides the content and focus of professional development of at your school?)

Shared Leadership

9. Do the teachers in this school view leadership as being shared?

If “no,” why do you think that is the case?

If “yes,” what evidence can you give to support that view?

(Possible follow-ups: What role does the (fill in the appropriate role: Assistant Principal, Instructional Facilitator, Lead Teacher) play in the operation of the school? What leadership roles do teachers have at this school? Do you have a school leadership council? If yes, what issues does the council decide?)

Shared Goals for Learning

10. Does the school have clear, focused goals that are understood by all members of the school community?

If “no,” why do you think that is the case?

If “yes,” what are they?

(Possible follow-ups: Do these goals affect what is taught and how teachers teach? If “yes,” what evidence can you site that supports your view? What role does the School Improvement Plan play, if any, in establishing clear, focused goals for the school?)

Learning Culture

11. How well does this school encourage learning by students, staff, and administrators?

If “no,” why do you think that is the case?

If “yes,” what evidence can you give that supports your view?

(Possible follow-ups: Does your school provide formal orientation and mentoring of new teachers? If yes, what evidence can you give that supports your view? Do teachers collaborate in the preparation of lessons, units, assessments, etc.? If yes, what evidence can you give that supports your view? Is professional development on target and meaningful? If yes, what evidence can you give that supports your view?)

School/Family/Community Connections

12. Are parents and community members are involved in and feel part of the school?

If “no,” why do you think that is the case?

If “yes,” what evidence can you give that supports your view?

(Possible follow-ups: Do parents volunteer to serve as aids in the classroom? Does the school have functions to which parents are invited? Does the school actively seek to involve the community in

the process of educating students? Is the school part of the community? If yes, what evidence can you give that supports your view?)

Closing

13. Is there anything I did not ask about that I should know in order to better understand your school?

Appendix B:
Parent Survey



Parent Survey

[School Name]

Please indicate your opinion regarding each of the items below by placing an X in the appropriate box at the end of each statement using the scale that includes **Never or No** (1), **Sometimes** (2), **Usually** (3), **Always or Yes** (4), and **Don't Know** (DK).

	Never (or No) 1	Sometimes 2	Usually 3	Always (or Yes) 4	Don't Know DK
1. My child's teacher periodically updates me on my child's progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. When the school year began, I received tips from my child's teacher(s) regarding how I could help her/him (them) be more effective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Parent conferences are scheduled at convenient times for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My child's teacher(s) promptly returns phone calls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My child's teacher(s) makes me feel I am welcome to visit my child's classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My child's teacher(s) has encouraged me to become a trained volunteer in my child's classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Students at my child's school are congratulated for high-quality work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Parents are surveyed annually regarding education matters related to my child's school and/or district.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My child's school regularly involves parents in planning and evaluating school goals and objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The principal of my child's school regularly and systematically meets with parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I have heard representatives of my child's school speak about my child's school to my civic organization, church, or at other community meetings I have attended.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My child's school regularly sends me a newsletter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I attend Open Houses at my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Open House at my child's school is an informative and positive experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I attend three or more school-sponsored, parent-driven special events at my child's school each year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am actively involved in the parent/teacher organization at my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix C:
Program Evaluation Standards Checklist

Checklist for Applying the Program Evaluation Standards

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The Standards were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

Standard & Descriptor	The Standard was	The Standard was partially addressed	The Standard was not addressed	The Standard was not applicable
U1 Stakeholder	✓			
U2 Evaluation Credibility	✓			
U3 Information Scope and	✓			
U4 Values Identification	✓			
U5 Report Clarity	✓			
U6 Report Timeliness and		✓		
U7 Evaluation Impact	✓			
F1 Practical Procedures		✓		
F2 Political Viability	✓			
F3 Cost Effectiveness	✓			
P1 Service Orientation	✓			
P2 Formal Agreements	✓			
P3 Rights of Human	✓			
P4 Human Interactions	✓			
P5 Complete and Fair	✓			
P6 Disclosure of Findings	✓			
P7 Conflict of Interest	✓			
P8 Fiscal Responsibility	✓			
A1 Program	✓			
A2 Context Analysis	✓			
A3 Described Purposes	✓			
A4 Defensible Information	✓			
A5 Valid Information	✓			
A6 Reliable Information	✓			
A7 Systematic Information	✓			
A8 Analysis of	✓			
A9 Analysis of Qualitative	✓			
A10 Justified Conclusions	✓			
A11 Impartial Reporting	✓			
A12 Metaevaluation			✓	

The Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

- ☐ Request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
☐ Evaluation plan/design/proposal
☐ Evaluation contract
- ☒ Evaluation report
☐ Other: _____

Name: Leslie Cairo III

Date: 11/8/05

Position or Title: Research and Evaluation Associate

Agency: Edvantia (formally AEL)

Address: Post Office Box 1348, Charleston, West Virginia 25325

Relationship to Document: One of three authors

(e.g., author of document, evaluation team leader, external auditor, internal auditor)

